

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing to you today as a current satellite TV subscriber who would like to add my voice of support to the pending merger of EchoStar and DIRECTV .. The combination of these two satellite providers will provide numerous benefits to consumers like me, including more choices in channels, programming, broadband and new television technologies.

By merging, the combined company will be a much stronger competitor to cable television and can offer more programming choices and, most importantly, all local TV channels in every market in the U.S. By providing local TV channels everywhere, this merger will make satellite television a strong alternative to cable in our community. Throughout the country, people will now be able to turn to satellite TV to access their local news, weather and community information, in addition to a comprehensive package of national video programming. But just as exciting, the merger will bring the availability of affordable high-speed Internet service by satellite to over 40 million Americans who don't have high-speed Internet access. These tremendous benefits to consumers won't happen without the merger. Satellite-delivered Internet service will bring an affordable and competitive alternative to cable modems and DSL to consumers in big cities, small towns and rural areas alike. This will give me a competitive choice for Internet access and will be especially advantageous to rural communities where cable modems and DSL are not likely to be available anytime in the near future, although in my area, it is available on a limited basis.

Rural communities (those outside the city limits) don't even have the choice of cable, and the major provider here in the Triangle area, Time-Warner Cable, is often in the news, and not usually in a positive light. People complain about being charged for service they don't get, often because they have downgraded, or receive fewer channels. However, it takes TWC several billing cycles and a call from a local reporter to get the problem corrected .. I once had cable when I was residing in an apartment, and although the service was fine, it took quite a while to get it going in the beginning, and there weren't that many channels. If I had a choice, though, between cable and satellite, I would choose satellite every time. My mother has been a subscriber to TWC for many years, and her current cable bill is more than my satellite bill, and I have more channels than she does, and I subscribe to HBO. She has to pay a rental fee for two cable boxes (and she only has the basic and standard tiers, not digital) and two remotes. Now, while there is currently a fee with the satellite companies for having more than one receiver, the subscribers own them. They do not have to be returned if we move or cancel our subscription. We just take them with us (leaving the dish behind for the next owner to use if he so chooses), and the company will ship us a new dish to our new location, and at a rate much lower than cancelling and resubscribing to cable when we move. When I upgraded my dish, the company made the appointment, the installer arrived on time, set it up and finished quickly. I have never had a problem with my billing, and the fees are spelled out for even the least technically-savvy person to understand. I still haven't figured out my mother's remote (nor has she). Nor have I figured out the logic (if there is any) behind the order of the channels

.. Dish Network groups channels together that share a theme. Looking for sports? All the sports channels are numerically grouped together. Family channels, premium channels, local channels, all grouped together to make them easy to find. Plus, there is a theme button on the remote, so you can pick whatever theme you're looking for and the onscreen guide will list the channels for you. How easy is that?

Many people believe they have no choice but the major cable company. Time-Warner does seem to have a monopoly, at

Sincerely,

Rita Gross
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